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*The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times.* By W. CUNNINGHAM, D.D. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1892.—771 pp.

Just a couple of years after the appearance of his first volume, Mr. Cunningham's untiring energy has produced the second and concluding part of his important treatise. Upon its title page appears for the first time, after the author's name, the title "Tooke Professor in King's College, London"; so that we are able to congratulate him both upon the completion of his literary task, and upon the attainment of a position from which he can in future exercise an independent influence upon economic teaching in England. It is an influence which will assuredly be salutary.

I need not repeat what I have already said (*POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*, vol. vi, page 152) of the general character of Professor Cunningham's work. His breadth of treatment is even more apparent in the second volume: it becomes encyclopaedic. From the wide movements of finance to the *minutiae* of rural economy and manufacturing processes, from Ireland to India, from the sins of the Puritans to the virtues of Ricardo, our author passes with confidence and a never-ceasing supply of information:

And still we gaze, and still the wonder [grows]  
That one small head should carry all he [knows].

Much of it has, no doubt, been "journey-work"; Mr. Cunningham cannot be equally interested in every part of his wide field. But it is everywhere the production of a man of sagacity and independence. Even where we least agree, Mr. Cunningham is stimulating; and where he is interested, he gives us excellent matter.

His treatment of the period from 1776 to 1815 (pages 442–573) is on the whole, I think, the best it has yet received. It will not indeed altogether supplant Held and Toynbee, for reasons to be given later; but it rests on a wider basis of knowledge than was possessed by either of these two writers, and it touches more sides of the economic life of the time. I would call especial attention to his comparison of industrial conditions under the domestic system with those under the factory system (pages 467–475). Mr. Cunningham believes, and with justice, that the position of the work-people before the introduction of machinery has been depicted in colors far too bright. He concludes with the remark that

if we compare the factory hand of the present day with the domestic worker

as he really was in the eighteenth century, it is hard to point out any characteristic trait or any single circumstance in which he has really suffered.

I am inclined to think that this will bear a little further arguing; but Mr. Cunningham's opinion points in the right direction. His account, again, of the administration of the poor-law during the same period is particularly well worth reading: he shows that the policy of the "Speenhamland Act," most mischievous as it undoubtedly was, had more apparent justification than we are wont to think; and he has called attention to an "allotment movement" which has been almost forgotten by English politicians.

Another admirable feature in the work is the attention given to unremembered writers. With Mr. Cunningham's account of Massie (pages 384 *et seq.*, 426 *et seq.*), the historian of economic literature may indeed say that "a new planet swims into his ken"; and—among stars of lesser magnitude—Governor Pownall will interest American readers in his unexpected rôle as critic of Adam Smith.

But while this volume is of more general interest than its predecessor, and will add to Mr. Cunningham's reputation as a writer of wide learning and vigorous originality, it can hardly be denied that the weaknesses of his method of treatment are even more apparent. He remarks in his Introduction that the "range" of his theme "is so wide, the complexity so great" that "we cannot begin our task until we have settled on some principle of selection" (page 3); and his main principle would seem to be that "as we are concerned with growth, and all growth means change, we must concentrate our attention on the beginning of each change" (page 5). Accordingly we are throughout confronted with details of new projects, new manufactures, new legislation. There is little description of the broad features of the industrial organization of each period; little attempt to disentangle the larger and more stable conditions from the minor and temporary. We are told *ad nauseam* of the attempts of the government to control this or that industry, and we are left with a very imperfect vision of what the industry was which they desired to control. Thus the narrative, to any one who sits down to read fifty pages of it at a time, creates a sense of confusion, an impression of perpetual flux, which is probably far from the truth.

Then, again, Mr. Cunningham confines his attention almost exclusively to England. I do not think any one would gather from this volume, what was certainly the case, that the economic experience of England was substantially the same as that of the rest of Western Europe. Of course England was more successful in

some directions than other nations, largely owing to natural advantages : but for this greater success, it would never have obtained its commercial and industrial supremacy. But to understand why England stood out from among the rest of the nations, it is necessary to realize what was the level of industrial and commercial organization and of governmental action which was common to it and to them. This is a reflection which has been suggested by Mr. Cunningham's omitting to deal at all adequately with the Mercantile System as a body of regulations and concrete conditions ; but the same weakness is apparent in his treatment of opinion. Thus he gives us a chapter on "Economic Doctrine in the period 1689–1776," in which the Physiocrats are only mentioned incidentally and allusively — only in so far, indeed, as they were criticised in one point by Adam Smith. It may be desirable to be sometimes insular; but when one is insular, one is a little apt to miss the true proportions of things.

The reader of the book requires one final caution. Mr. Cunningham has worked with exceeding rapidity ; but like most other very rapid workers he not infrequently makes slips. If one wants to study at all minutely any particular period, Mr. Cunningham's references will sometimes be the better for a little verification. This is particularly the case with the acts of Parliament on which he lays so great a stress ; here it sometimes looks as if our author trusted a little too much to his first hasty impressions.

Mr. Cunningham's aim has been an ambitious one ; and he has met with no small measure of success. But it was a task which in the nature of things no one man could hope to accomplish quite satisfactorily, in the space of a few years, by his own unaided efforts. The field is to a large extent an unworked one ; in every direction Mr. Cunningham has been obliged to push out alone ; so that it has been impossible for him to do more than indicate what it is that needs investigation, and to lay before us provisional conclusions. But to the small but growing body of students who are interested in economic history, it is of the utmost service that a competent scholar should have sketched out for them a rough plan of the area to be examined, should have drawn up a programme to guide their labors. This is what Mr. Cunningham has done by his two volumes ; and it is a service which altogether obscures the well-nigh necessary defects in the performance.

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